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Characters' Solution vs. The Playwright's Dissolution of Online Culture in Lucy Prebble's *The Sugar Syndrome*

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I. Introduction

At the end of the twentieth century, i.e. the 1980s, the Western world has started witnessing a new chapter in the field of communication; it is the rise of the world of the internet where smartphones, laptops, and computers have coalesced into humans' life to play an essential part in remodeling a Western man's communication, thoughts, and culture. Carne (2011, p. xiii) described this digital generation as "persons who naturally accept cellphones, laptops, iTunes, and the Internet as normal, readily available parts of their lives." The digital age alters life into online existence.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, ubiquitous universal networks have conquered the entire world as the best solution for connections and communications. The actual world of talking person to person has transformed into a cybernetics world where intelligent machines occupy human bodies, digital codes overcome human minds, information-processing systems substitute human information, and cybernetic ideas replace human thoughts.

Contemporary playwrights have keenly responded to the current digital themes like the impacts of cybernetics, the intertwining of identity with cybernetic lines, conflicts of human and non-human agents, and so on through constructing a contemporary genre called posthuman drama. Lucy Prebble shares these thematic issues in her posthuman play *The Sugar Syndrome* (2003). The present study analyzes this play in terms of the theory of posthumanism. The play, which is "a sound performance, provocatively bringing out the conflicts of modern-day technological and societal taboos" (Swanson (2013, p. 3), presents characters resort to the digital world as a solution to get rid of their physical world. Therefore, it has dialogues delivered directly by the characters' computers; and stage directions full of screens, ringing tones, and electronic gadgets. The role of this study is to demonstrate the dark side of the online world in dissolving the youths' lives through exploring the characters' attitudes vs. the playwright's.

II. Theories of Posthumanism

The study employs theories of posthumanism to critique Prebble's play. It is worth noting that the theories surveyed here have an association with the analysis of characters' vs. the playwright's standpoints.

Man's frequent attachment to and influence of digital technologies as well as the latter's control over his/her life and culture have led to the emergence of theories seeking to interpret what the influence of this technology on humans is and what beyond humans' capacities is; they are called posthumanism. Many theorists, scholars, and philosophers have worked hard to obtain precise, comprehensive definitions and implications for posthumanism.

In its broader sense, posthumanism refers to "encounters between human and nonhuman agency" (Pickering, 2001, p. 3-4). This "nonhuman agency" can be machines, things, or even animals, but the focal point is advanced technology. Therefore, the overriding interpretation of posthumanism is a remodeling of the relationship between human beings and intelligent digital machines in which a computer stands for the

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mind, and a cybernetic (they) stands for the human (I). As a result of this cybernetic notion of humans, an online culture emerges.

All theorists acknowledge the role of digital technology in emerging posthumanism. Katherine Hayles, in *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), is the first who connects posthumanism with the cybernetic patterns. She defined posthumanism as "so complex that it involves a range of cultural and technical sites, including nanotechnology, microbiology, virtual reality, artificial life, neurophysiology, artificial intelligence, and cognitive science, among others" (p. 247). She states the similarity between humans and cybernetic machines "humans were to be seen primarily as information-proceeding entities that are essentially similar to intelligent machines" (p. 7). Theorists are always aware of the space literature takes in the heart of theories. They often connect between the two. Hayles senses the interrelation between theory, literature, and cybernetics. Thus, she intensifies the influence of cybernetics on the humans' identity, culture, and life. The human subject, in cybernetics, is assessed through the pattern of a smart machine; therefore, both human beings and those machines can remodel each other in a perpetual "feedback loop" (2). Her notion of the cybernetic pattern is extended by Cary Wolfe, who added nonhuman agency and the natural world.

Like Hayles, Wolfe considered the connection between humans and technology as an essential feature of posthumanism. In *What is Posthumanism?* (2009), he referred to the combination between cybernetic and poststructural patterns as he deemed a person "as a fundamentally prosthetic creature that has coevolved with various forms of technicity and materiality, forms that are radical 'not human' and yet have nevertheless made the human what it is" (p.xxv). Further, he illustrated the influence of cybernetics on "language and culture" as he regarded "the prosthetic coevolution of the human-animal with the technicity of tools and external archival mechanisms (such as language and culture)" (p.xv).

Similar to Hayles and Wolfe is Rosi Braidotti, who in *The Posthuman* (2013) highlighted the effects of contemporary sciences on humans and their lives: "contemporary science and biotechnologies affect the very fiber and structure of the living and have altered dramatically our understanding of what counts as the basic frame of reference for the human today" (p.40). She defined posthumanism "as a position that transposes hybridity, nomadism, diasporas, and creolization processes into means of re-grounding claims to subjectivity, connections and community among subjects of the human and the non-human kind" (50). She is optimistic that advanced technologies, e.g., media technology, have succeeded in locating humans with their cultures and identities in a new paradigm of the self.

A wave of critics has observed the dark side of posthumanism. Francis Fukuyama, for instance, argued that it is the "condition of threat posed by allegedly invasive new technologies to the integrity of human nature" (Cited in Wallace, 2010, p. 692). He displayed that posthumanism hurts humans and that intelligent machines have led to the destruction of humanity. Wallace agreed with Fukuyama in this view. In "Literature and Posthumanism," Wallace remarked that "posthuman denotes a new postlapsarian, a contemporary version of the Fall in which the sciences of genetics, neurology, cybernetics, and informatics interfere with an otherwise pristine state of human nature and freedom" (2010, p. 692). Because of posthumanism and cybernetics, humans carelessly lose themselves.

Cybernetics, a term coined by Norbert Wiener, the American mathematician, is not less significant than posthumanism in the mid-twentieth century. Consequently, it has been given a good focus by critics and theorists. In *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*, Wiener describes cybernetics as a means of communication based on sciences that has the system of sending and receiving information; in that system, "there is a human link in the chain of transmission and return of information" which is called "the chain of feedback" (1962, p. 96). He means that for hundreds of years, humans have been reshaping their status in the form of intelligent machines.

Scott Bukatman's "Postcards from the Posthuman Solar System" views how cybernetics possesses the human body: "The body is no longer simply the repository of the soul; it has become a cyborg body, one element in an endless interface of bio-technologies" (1991, n.p.). The human body does not exist any longer because it has been substituted for computers. Bukatman featured the influential relationship of cybernetics and literature. He focuses mainly on science fiction (1991, n.p.):

> At the intersection of cybernetics and phenomenology, the body already operates as an interface between mind and experience. Still in contemporary SF and horror, the body is also narrated as a site of exploration and transfiguration, through which an interface with an electronically based postmodern experience is inscribed. [...] The SF text stages the superimposition of technology upon the human in all its effects.

He demonstrated the manner fiction could add new perspectives to posthumanism and referred to the codependent relationship between the body and technology concerning the effects of the latter.

In his *The Posthuman Condition: Consciousness Beyond the Brain* (2003), Robert Pepperell signaled that "robotics, prosthetics, machine intelligence, nanotechnology, and genetic manipulation" in addition to global communication, cybernetics, artificial life, and

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virtual reality triggered by technological advancements have massive impacts on "our sense of human existence" (1). He illustrated how technology and science had created uncertainty: "certainty, like belief, only arises in the absence of full information" (169). However, this matter is not fearful in posthumanism "in posthuman terms, uncertainty is nothing to fear" simply because it is better than "to impose a false sense of certainty" (169). Different from all theorists, Pepperell stipulated that posthumanism, whose unpredictability and uncertainty are among its core characteristics, is a denotation of human's limitation (167):

> The shift into posthumanism, the shift from a universe of certainty and predictability to a universe of uncertainty and unpredictability. And with this, we start to realize our capacity to order and control the universe is ultimately limited. Randomness, ambiguity, and relativity remain integral to the cosmic process as their opposites; none of them can be eliminated from our attempts at analysis or ignored when theorizing about the operation of natural events.

Posthumanism and cybernetics do not only influence the actual world but even literature. Concerning the transformation of life and culture, contemporary theatres have mapped and negotiated them in a new genre called posthuman drama.

III. Posthuman Drama

Due to the spread of online culture in the late twentieth century, Causey explored that theatre "needs to engage in technologies that have helped to occasion that culture" (Causey, 2002, p.182). To this end, theatre works investigate posthumanism and cybernetics on stage through producing dramatic texts deal with digital technologies.

Posthuman drama is that type in which plays deal with investigating the relationships between humans and cybernetics. Due to the failure of communication in physical life, the contacts and encounters between humans have become virtually through computers, which is a fundamental theme in posthuman drama. In this case, machines are preferable even to gods, described by Haraway (1991, p.181): "I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess." Another central theme of the posthuman drama is emerging online existence and spreading online culture. Haraway (1991, p.169) affirmed that "the social relations of the new technologies is the reformulation of … culture … for the large scientific and technical work-force". Such plays address "visual realization" of the 20 and 21 centuries life (Carlson, 2015, p.578).

A key feature in the characters of posthuman drama is as viewed by Reilly (2011, p.9) that they are "mimesis of objects" to networked machines. Thus, human physicality and machines are equal. To describe identity in posthuman drama, it is a mixture of biological and cybernetic formation. It is no longer a pure human identity. Playwrights seek to answer this question: what is a general view of being humans in the mechanical age?

Since posthuman drama views machines as having a significant place in the events, the setting is a combination of virtual and actual environments. Implications for how humans can co-evolve with their intelligent machines in the age of the internet have become a focus in posthuman drama. An exemplar of this genre selected for analysis is *The Sugar Syndrome* by Lucy Prebble (2003).

Prebble (born in 1980) is a British playwright who keeps pace with the events of the times. Whenever the world goes through contemporary events, we find Lucy among the first to write about them in her plays. At the age of 23, she observed the phenomenon of moving towards online life through technological devices. As a result, she produced her debut play, *The Sugar Syndrome*. Aston (2006, p.82) emphasized that the play deals with "an idea of escaping damaged subjectivities and sexualities is linked to new technologies and cyberspace: to the possibilities of electronic lives and on-line identities."

The Sugar Syndrome, winning the George Devine Award, premiered at the Royal Court in London and directed by Marianne Elliot in 2003 (Akbar, 2020, p. 2). It shares several posthuman matters through theme, character, and plot. The internet has a basic role as a character since there are dialogues said by it. The setting is swinging between the actual environment and cyberspace. From the beginning of the play, there are email compositions, online chatrooms, and dialogues whose sounds are as loud and effective as humans' voices, for instance, "the sound of a modem dialing" (Prebble, 1.1. p.32). Prebble advocated that "cyberspace . . . need not be naturalistically portrayed with screens and computers etc." (2003, p. 31). Thus, the core of the play is on the characters and their belief in online culture as a solution, not their digital machines.

IV. Solution vs. Dissolution of Online Culture in *The Sugar Syndrome*

The Sugar Syndrome situates its story in a virtual atmosphere starting with Dani carter, a 17-year-old girl, connecting to the internet whose voice can be heard clearly. This is a fundamental element of posthuman drama. She is sick biologically, an eating disorder, and psychologically, hating her parents and school, and she does not have friends. Due to these reasons, she finds in her laptop the solution to forget her miseries:

> INTERNET. Welcome to Chatarama, Dani 2752. Please choose a chatroom.
>
> (*She clicks*.) Chatrooms by LOCATION. Enter post code.
>
> (Prebble, 1.1.p.32)

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Such dialogues between humans and non-humans characters are an important feature of posthuman drama. They indicate the mingling of flesh and data. The moment Dani chooses a chatroom, a wave of messages delivered to her from Lewis Sampson, 22 years old, whom she knows from the internet. The conversation between Dani and Lewis begins with suspicion:

> LEWIS. How will I know it's you? What are you wearing?
>
> (Prebble, 1.1.p.32)

Gencer and Koc (2012, p. 34) signified that "the level of Internet abuse was the highest among those students who used the Internet mostly at home . . . because home access provides anytime and unlimited access". Pebble pointed to the most common harms caused by the internet in this play. One of the dominant cases is uncertainty about the authentic identity of the user. Lewis wants evidence that the user is Dani herself.

Another reason drives Dani to find her relief on the internet portrayed here is that her belief that humans, in reality, cheat on each other, and lie to each other whereas in the digital world, they are frank and honest:

> DANI. I chat a lot. I like the internet. I lie that way of talking to people. It's honest.
>
> (Prebble, 1.1.p.32)

This quotation means that for Dani, meetings through intelligent machines are enough to understand the characters and minds of humans. So, she interprets Lewis's question of identity as an excuse for having sex. Having cybersex is another badness of digital technology that destroys humans' lives, the playwright reflects in this play. Dowden (2020, p. 2) demonstrated that their behavior is caused by illness: "this odd couple — both misfits who feel intense self-loathing — help each other with their respective illnesses as they try to move on from their vicious cycles of behavior." He maintained that "'The sugar syndrome' refers to the characters' search for an instant buzz, one that all too often leaves a bitter aftertaste" (Ibid.).

Prebble moves the environment from cyberspace to landscape space – this intermingling of virtual and actual environments adds another factor of posthuman drama to the play- to demonstrate that if the virtual world replaces the actual world, destruction would be the result. The first actual meeting between Lewis and Dani is in Lewis's bedroom with Dani's strange question:

> DANI. Tell me straight then, am I what you expected?
>
> (Prebble, 1.1.p.32)

She wants to know whether a portrait formed in his mind about her while they met online is different from reality or the same. Her question with Lewis's disability of reply is another reference to the failure of online relationships since it can be subject to cheat and lies.

A percussive indicator of the breakdown of the cyborg world is that it paves the way towards having sex in reality besides cybersex:

> DANI. (*gently*) Have you been thinking about this, yeah?
>
> LWEIS. (*kissing her neck, getting into it*) Yeah.
>
> DANI. You've been thinking about kissing me, touching me, yeah?
>
> LWEIS. Yeah.
>
> (Prebble, 1.1.p.34)

Encouraged by cyberspace, Dani behaves elder than her age, and thus, she is eager to having sex more than Lewis is:

> DANI. (*playful*) I've been thinking about your cock.
>
> (Prebble, 1.1.p.34)

Derrida and Luhmann expostulated that what separated humans from the physical world is "the principle of openness from closure," which they find in cybernetics (cited in Wolfe, 2009, p. xxi). This feature, freedom, is liked most by Dani. She is bolder in cyberspace than in reality:

> DANI. Do you want me to tell you what I'd like to do to you? Or I could type it out if that helps.
>
> (Prebble, 1.1.p.34)

She can do whatever she likes without fears or hesitation. She is convinced that the internet is "…a place where people are free to say anything they like. And most of what they say is about sex" (Prebble, 1.1.p.38). Her contentedness that cybernetics provides freedom and honesty, the features which are missed in the physical world in her belief, creates a contradiction in her character. On the one side, she sees that people are honest through online chat without restrictions of reality. On the other side, she believes that the internet gives humans the freedom to do anything, including deceit, as she does with Tim Saunders, a man of 38:

> DANI. I was chatting to this bloke who thought I was an eleven-year-old boy.
>
> (Prebble, 1.1.p.38)

Online deceit is another indication of the dissolution of online culture displayed by Prebble here. As a pedophile, Tim finds in the digital connections his way of preying on kids for raping them. A boy of 11 years old as Dani deceives him is another benefit supplied by the internet. Hayles (1999, p. xiii) labeled the process of online deceit as follows:

> The crucial move of distinguishing between the enacted body, present in the flesh on one side of the computer screen, and the represented body, produced through verbal and semiotic markers in an electronic environment. This construction makes the subject into a cyborg, for the enacted and represented bodies are brought into conjunction through the technology that connects them.

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The online meeting results in Dani's missing her classes and leaving her school to meet Tim physically, a step which is one of the worst effects of online friendships.

Like the first actual meeting between Dani and Lewis, Tim and Dani's is also characterized by doubt and more with shock. Tim expected to see an 11-year-old boy:

TIM. You must have me confused with somebody else.

DANI. (*sticks out her hand*) I'm Dani.

Tim's *face reveals his surprise and disappointment before he recovers*.

(Prebble, 1.3.p.42-43)

For the second time, Prebble refers to the problem of missing the real identity via the internet that arouses the character's doubts compared to the landscape. In this sense, she agreed with Viola's standpoint that in posthumanism, "the question of identity has no longer any meaning" (Cited in Valera, 2014, p.385). A lot of characteristics of their true identities are uncovered only through this physical meeting. It exposes many things that have been secretly hidden behind online chatrooms. First, Dani is astonished that Tim is classy, which is unlike a portrait she forms in her mind while encountering online:

DANI. You're quite posh.

(Prebble, 1.3.p. 43)

Dani's sentence is Prebble's technique to exhibit how it is easy to be deceived by appearance. This opinion is confirmed by Crompton as she expressed that "Prebble's exploration of how evil can lurk beneath the most civilized and gentle of surfaces" is depicted through the character of Tim, who appears as "a man of such tender kindness that the flickers of violence beneath his skin are truly surprising," therefore he is "a danger as well as a victim" (2020, p. 2). Tim's shock is terrific. The portrait he has drawn about Dani as a boy is collapsed, and thus, he can hardly comprehend what is going on:

TIM. Thank you.

He looks around suspiciously.

I'd best be off.

(Prebble, 1.3.p. 43)

Suspicion still controls Tim in a manner that makes Dani think he has problems that need to be solved:

DANI. You're not in any trouble.

TIM. I really don't know what you mean.

(Prebble, 1.3.p. 43)

Dani guesses that the human world is his only trouble:

DANI. (*stands up*) Well I'll just follow you until you go home and then I'll know where you live which is worse, isn't it?

(Prebble, 1.3.p. 43)

She describes the place as "worse." It is an indication of her preference for the cyborg world to the real place. Contrary to her view, she desires to go with him to his house. This willingness is strange to both of them:

Suspicious but intrigued, Tim *sits back down*. Dani *sits down and, like a cat with a mouse, is at a bit of a loss*.

(Prebble, 1.3.p. 43)

Through this stage direction, Prebble introduces another decline in the advanced technology: Tim is afraid of this relationship constructed from the internet, and Dani is lost.

Dani's addiction to the cyborg machine – a reflection that the human body and machines are equal and this in return refers to another typical characteristic of posthuman drama-drags her to the abusive language which is dissolution in terms of Prebble – followed Hayles's notion of the impact of the internet on "language and culture"- but it is a solution according to Dani:

DANI. I've been going to loads of classes. But they can think again if they think I'm turning up for registrations and assemblies and General fucking Studies. JAN. Language.

(Prebble, 1.5.p. 53)

The above is a conversation between Dani and her mother Jan, over a telephone call from Dani's tutor complaining that Dani's absences from the school need a justification. Dani does not attend classes because she has chosen online existence, which is deemed a great theme of the posthuman drama. She spends most of her time chatting on the laptop or meeting strangers she has known through the internet. Such choice springs from her confidence in those cyborg machines as her saviors from her monotonous life.

Ferrando (2014, p.168) claimed that posthumanism tackles "existential aspects" such as addressing "the question who am I? in conjunction with other related questions, such as: what am I? and where and when are we?". In this play, Prebble sheds light on such issues. Critical obscure secrets revolve around the identity of Tim and Dani are known after they meet in reality and speak face to face. Tim is startled because of her strange nature of interested in having sex. Concerning Tim, Dani feels that he has vague emotions toward boys:

DANI. (*confused*) You like boys.

TIM. Yes. It's odd.

(Prebble, 1.7.p. 62)

Then she knows that he hit David's father in his head, David is his boyfriend, with a cricket bat because the father discovered their dirty relationship. Further, a striking secret about Tim is that he has spent a period of his life in jail. Despite all that, she still sees him as a good guy. The matter is more complicated when she quarrels with Lewis online to defend him:

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LEWIS. I'm not comparing myself to a child molester.

DANI. Don't call him that. He's a friend.

LEWIS. You can't be friends with that.

DANI. I've met him. He's sweet.

(Prebble, 1.7.p. 69)

Dani is mentally unstable. She deceives herself that Tim is the right friend for her. Akbar (2020, p. 3) attributed Dani's insistence on Tim's friendship for psychological reasons: "Dani makes psychological comparisons relating the repressed urges of her eating disorder to Tim's paedophilic desires." Therefore she stated that their physical relationship is a continuation of online deceit: "The connection feels both forced and over-explained, even if it is part of Dani's self-delusion that she has found an affinity with this older, damaged man" (Ibid). Furthermore, the dysfunctional family atmosphere is another reason. The father is in the town divorced from the mother. His duty towards his daughter is limited to supplying her with money. Dani reflects that she needs his physical presence more than his pocket:
JAN. Do you know how much he's paying a term for you to swan in and out of that sixth form?

DANI. Oh well I'm sorry. I'll try harder to be value for money.

(Prebble, 1.5.p. 53)

His absence physically is a reason for Dani's escaping into cybernetics. And now, her emphasis on his physical existence is evidence that she does not like online existence, but is obliged to it.

The conflicts Dani faces through virtual and actual encounters with Lewis and Tim are an onset towards a dramatic change in her ideology. Her first step begins with Jan:

JAN. (*exhales*) What a day.

DANI. Are you going to tell me about it?

(Prebble, 1.9.p. 70)

She intends to befriend Jan as compensation for cyberfriends. Unfortunately, and this deems another fundamental reason for Dani's adherence to the cyborg world, the mother cannot meet Dani's need for warm parents. Akbar (2020, p. 3) marked that Jan is "the guilt-ridden" mother. Her hot temper leads to Dani's leaving home to go to Tim's house. Instead of running into her laptop, as usual, Dani seeks a solution in Tim's house, which is a massive genuine transformation in her culture from online to actual.

The impact of online life creates a tremendous gap in Dani's natural life. In Tim's house, Tim cannot find an explanation for her strange behavior; she is dancing naked:

TIM. (*fondly*) You're a lunatic, you are.

DANI. How do I look?

TIM. Like a stripper. No offence.

DANI. No, no. That was the look I was going for.

SHE continues to dance and gets him to copy her. He does, selfconsciously.

(Prebble, 2.1.p. 80)

Not only Dani's addiction to the internet affects her actions, but also Lewis. His addiction to chatting online with Dani whenever he likes has reached the stage of having hysteria if she does not reply. Her ignorance of his messages and emails- which symbolizes her ignorance of the cyborg life to luxurious time with Tim physically- leads him to go unconsciously to Tim's house looking for Dani:

LEWIS. Look mate. I know all about you and unless you want your neighbours to know and all, I'd let me in.

TIM. There's no need for *that*.

(Prebble, 2.3.p. 93)

In this vein, Prebble supported Pepperell's notion that technology "has not fed through general consciousness" (2003, p.1). Lewis goes mad, he threatens Tim to keep away from Dani, and otherwise, he would reveal his black history to his neighbors. In the middle of encountering, both agree on a negative impact of the online world on Dani:

LEWIS. I worry about her. She's the sort of girl who puts herself in dangerous positions..

TIM. I know.

(Prebble, 2.3.p. 93)

The freedom which cybernetics grants to its users has dangerous dimensions too. Dani's virtual freedom leads to putting two strangers face to face. More importantly, it leads to the destruction of all of them.

In addition to Dani and Lewis, Tim's addiction to digital machines plays a fatal influence in his life. His raping of small boys comes in the first place. Actual encountering with Lewis opens Tim's eyes that digital technology is not the solution for a good life. Therefore, he admits to Dani that he regrets having done things via his laptop:

TIM. I do have things I shouldn't have.

Pause.

DANI. OK.

TIM. On my computer.

DANI. You never said.

TIM. I was embarrassed.

DANI. Just delete it.

(Prebble, 2.4.p. 98)

Both are now convinced of the dissolution of technology advancements. Consequently, Dani advises Tim to remove them from his laptop as a means to forget them. Dani imagines that because it is a machine, to delete things from the laptop means they will be deleted even from the human's mind. Here, Prebble emphasized Hayles's view that humans' minds and

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machines are "essentially similar," but this is from Dani's point of view. As for Prebble, she displayed that despite the measureless domination of internet culture on the mind and thinking of the youth, they cannot be similar. If humans can delete undesirable things from the memory card of their intelligent machines, they cannot delete them from their minds, and this is Tim's recent viewpoint:

> TIM. They've very clever, you can't delete anything. Not completely.
>
> (Prebble, 2.4.p. 99)

Like Dani, Tim finally recognizes the dissolution rather than the solution to online life. For this reason, he decides to get rid of his laptop, which is a symbol of the cyborg world:

> TIM. Dani, will you look after it for me?
>
> DANI. Your computer?
>
> TIM. Would you take it?
>
> DANI. OK. What's on it?
>
> *A silence*.
>
> (Prebble, 2.4.p. 99)

In this play, stage directions have a distinct function in affirming Prebble's perspective of the dissolution of online culture as opposed to her characters' standpoint as a solution. This time, the stage direction "*silence,*" comes after Dani's question "What's on it?" and followed by no reply on the part of Tim, is a confirmation of the tragic consequences of the internet in ruining Tim's life instead of developing it.

Tim is not the only victim of totally relying on the internet as a solution to live the life he desires, but also Lewis, who goes to face Dani at her house. Dani scolds him that this action is due to a mental disorder:

> DANI. Christ, worlds colliding. Fuck, Lewis! Have you been round town looking for stone lions? You mental.
>
> LEWIS. I wanted to see where you live.
>
> DANI. Oh my God. And that doesn't strike you as strange?
>
> LEWIS. You could have just phoned me.
>
> DANI. You've got no right!
>
> LEWIS. Why didn't you call?
>
> DANI. Maybe because you're quite obviously a psycho.
>
> (Prebble, 2.5.p. 104)

Dani confronts Lewis that he has no right to neither comes to her house nor Tim's house. Lewis's justification is his care and love, which is rejected because they do not know each other:

> LEWIS. Dani, I care about you. I went round there cos … I love you.
>
> DANI. Don't. Talk. Shite.
>
> *A pause*.
>
> You love me. You don't even know me.
>
> *A pause*.
>
> (Prebble, 2.5.p. 105)

This conversation has a direct confession from Dani that relationships using the internet have no validity in comparison with the actual ones. Therefore, Lewis has not the right to worry about her or love her. Hence, this is another case depicted by Prebble that digital life cannot replace human's actual life. What is worse is that Dani believes that the internet is a way to satisfy sexual desires. So, she fulfills Lewis's wish:

> DANI. Let's be honest, you met me to have sex and that's wonderful, that's simple, that's clean, I liked that. I wanted to help you. Just like with Tim. He needs fixing. You needed a shag, Lewis, let's be honest, that's what you were after.
>
> (Prebble, 2.5.p. 105)

Lewis is shocked by this view, for he never thinks of exploiting Dani for any nasty desire:

> LEWIS. That's bollocks. I never used you.
>
> DANI. I never felt used. Just useful.
>
> (Prebble, 2.5.p. 105)

Eventually, Lewis fathoms how much he has mistaken in evaluating online relationships:

> LEWIS. What are you, the littlest fucking hobo of the Internet?
>
> (Prebble, 2.5.p. 105)

The meaninglessness of the digital world is embodied here. The relationship between Dani and Lewis explicit the conflicts between the cyborg world and the physical world with reference to the triumph of the latter.

The dispute between Dani and Lewis continues. Each of them wants to purge themselves from abuses inflicted on them due to online chatting but in vain. Whereas Dani sees that she does everything for Lewis's relaxation and enjoyment, Lewis sees that she deceives and fools him for her relief and pastime:

> LEWIS. I don't know. I didn't have you down as this selfish.
>
> DANI. Selfish my arse! I've done everything for you.
>
> (Prebble, 2.5.p. 106)

The argument ends with the end of their relationship, which has been formed through the internet as clarified by the stage direction:

> *The weakness of* **Dani**'s *remark hangs in the air*. **Lewis** *leaves, his final look at her is one of pity*.
>
> **Lewis** *exits*.
>
> (Prebble, 2.5.p. 106)

Because she is depressed, Dani runs to her solution as a source of comfortableness, but this time she opens Tim's laptop instead of hers. Unfortunately, it announces the end of Dani's relationship with Tim too:

> *There is the sound of the computer letting her in*. **Dani** if *touched and delighted. She clicks on icons on the computer, revealing images which we cannot see. She clicks a couple more times to reveal different images. She is shocked but entranced. An audio file is opened. The sound of a young boy, eight or nine, screaming in terror and begging through tears for it to stop. It is chillingly real*. **Dani** *is*

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appalled and deeply shaken by the monstrous sound. Her frantic clicking does nothing and she is forced to slam the lid of the computer to halt the screams. She is on the verge of tears.

(Prebble, 2.5.p. 107)

The laptop which brought Dani and Tim together is the same that ends their relationship. The true nature of Tim is discovered through his computer. Dani is petrified as she sees the videos of small boys screaming because of Tim's sexual attacks. Swanson (2013, p. 2) elucidated that "[t]he inhuman noises the computers have emitted previously are replaced by this one, heart-wrenching human cry" comes from Dani. Finally, she infers that humans are the same, whether in reality or on the internet. Technological progress cannot change bad humans into good:

A pause. **Dani** *has been reflecting*.

DANI. Why are people so cruel?

(Prebble, 2.5.p. 108)

She persuaded herself that the internet is the only solution to fill the gap in her life. Jan opens her eyes to this fact:

JAN. You persuade yourself in your head, that a certain way of behaving is acceptable.

(Prebble, 2.5.p. 109)

In line with Lewis and Tim, Dani regards Tim, who once looked at, as her future husband as nothing:

Dani's *gaze falls on the laptop. Her mother sees it*.

JAN. Whose is that?

DANI. It's no one's.

JAN. It's not yours.

DANI. No, I have to get rid of it.

(Prebble, 2.5.p. 110-111)

Dani's statement, "I have to get rid of it," is a clue to the end of her online relationships and not only with Tim or with his laptop. According to Swanson (2013, p. 2), Dani's devastating of Tim's laptop means "simple humanity triumphs over technology." By this, Prebble gives the last sign of the collapse of online culture in *The Sugar Syndrome*.

V. Conclusion

Prebble is not against the technology of the internet, but she is against addicting it to leave this world and live in the online world. Therefore, *The Sugar Syndrome* is an exemplar of the result of online existence. She creates characters that support cybernetics so that she can convince her audience of her standpoint. Dani, Lewis, and Tim are all exhibit as not normal characters, which is a token that normal humans should be different from machines.

After having analyzed the play, the study has investigated the effects of the online culture of the life of the youth. The mingling of flesh and data is one of the disadvantages of the digital world. The young characters sense the machines as humans like them. That is why Tim keeps videos of his victims on his laptop. For him, the laptop is Tim's history and past. Online deceit is another hazardous impact on the internet. Dani deceives Tim that she is a boy of 11 years old. They chat online as two males. Only when they meet physically, the truth is revealed. Cybersex behind anonymous online chatrooms is also among the risky influences of cybernetics. Dani views the cyborg world as the perfect world where she can do everything, including sex. Accordingly, she has sex with both Lewis and Tim in cyberspace and landscape.

In the end, the young characters perceive that they have mistaken in thinking of obtaining perfection via the internet world. Thus and as a way to correct this point of view, they leave online connections and communication; Lewis leaves Dani, Tim leaves his laptop, and Dani leaves her laptop and Tim. They get the inevitable conclusion that the digital world cannot be the solution they are running after, which is Prebble's point of view from the beginning.

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